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Thursday, 14 December 1995, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral . . . . . (Portugal)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 46 *(continued)*

Assistance in mine clearance

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/408)

Draft resolution (A/50/L.57)

Mr. Yang Lee (Republic of Korea): At the outset, my delegation would like to join previous speakers in expressing our appreciation to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, which has made significant and valuable contributions regarding land-mine issues.

The land-mine issue has been an important and serious one for the international community. It is a problem that has devastating global humanitarian consequences.

Unlike other conventional weapons, land-mines represent a particular menace in a post-conflict environment. Long after the realization of peace, land-mines and other unexploded devices continue indiscriminately to injure, maim and kill. As a result, it is largely civilians rather than combatants who fall prey to these weapons. Moreover, the danger and uncertainty caused by mines delays the repatriation of refugees, hinders the conveyance of urgently needed humanitarian relief and obstructs the process of rebuilding the national economy. Indeed, land-mines portend a terrible legacy for fragile, war-torn societies by impeding all stages of socio-economic and political development. With more than 100 million mines spread through 62 countries, this problem has reached global proportions.

The seriousness of the global land-mine issue demands concerted action on the part of the international community. In accordance with resolution 49/215, the International Meeting on Mine Clearance was held at Geneva last July. This global Meeting, attended by almost 100 countries, including the Republic of Korea, and various international bodies and non-governmental organizations, offered a tremendous opportunity to mobilize international support for mine clearance. My delegation is greatly encouraged by the determination and commitment exhibited by many countries in respect of tackling this problem, in the spirit of international cooperation, during the International Meeting on Mine Clearance. In addition to generating substantial financial support for United Nations mine-clearing activities, this Meeting was invaluable in raising international awareness of land-mine issues and instrumental in further enhancing international technical cooperation in this regard.

My delegation wishes to express its deep concern that the number of mines being laid each year far surpasses that of mines cleared within this time-frame. According to the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/50/408, during the past year, approximately 100,000 land-mines were removed, while

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more than 2 million were newly laid. These disturbing figures clearly indicate that de-mining alone is not the answer to this serious problem. A more comprehensive, preventive approach must be formulated.

First and foremost, it is essential that limits be placed upon the proliferation of anti-personnel mines, thereby reducing the possibility of irresponsible access to these lethal weapons. One significant initiative on the part of the international community has been to implement a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel mines. Since most of those countries strewn with land-mines do not actually manufacture them, these measures will greatly alleviate the human loss and economic suffering inflicted by land-mines.

On 28 September of this year, Mr. Gong Ro-Myung, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, in his statement to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, announced our Government's decision to adopt an extendible one-year moratorium, underlining the Republic of Korea's commitment to the resolution of this serious issue by its joining the increasing number of countries implementing national moratoriums on the export of anti-personnel land-mines.

While my country is not yet a party to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, we have shown a keen interest in the international effort to strengthen Protocol II of the Convention, and, in this regard, we hope that resumed sessions of the Review Conference will bring about meaningful results.

The United Nations has played an indispensable role in the field of assistance in land-mine clearance. My delegation commends the Organization for its efforts and activities undertaken in this field and for its ongoing resolve to enhance the effectiveness of mine-clearing programmes. My Government is of the view that various channels of mine-clearance assistance, whether through bilateral or regional arrangements, should be kept open. Having said this, however, we are firmly convinced that the coordinating role of the United Nations in such efforts should be strengthened in order to avoid the inefficient allocation of resources.

My Government also endorses the United N ions Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance, established last year by the General Assembly in accordance with its resolution 48/7. In this regard, I am very pleased to announce my Government's decision to make a voluntary contribution of $100,000 to the Trust Fund.

Finally, my delegation, as one of the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/50/L.57, on assistance in mine clearance, would like to express its sincere hope that the draft resolution will be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Pine (New Zealand): New Zealand wants to work to eliminate anti-personnel land-mines entirely from the world's armouries. That goal was stated from this rostrum by the New Zealand Foreign Minister during his statement in the general debate. I want to reiterate it today.

Consistent with that position, New Zealand attended the first Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, in September, ready to support an international consensus to eliminate anti-personnel land-mines immediately. Given that this — our preferred position — was, unfortunately, not in prospect, we participated in the review process with a number of clear objectives aimed at securing the strongest possible measures to control land-mines.

These objectives included an effective and streamlined verification and compliance regime, including fact-finding; restrictions on imports and exports of anti-personnel mines, particularly to non-parties and non-State entities; extension of the provisions of the Convention to cover internal conflicts as well as international ones — it is a sad fact that most of the problems associated with land-mines have resulted from conflicts within, and not between, States; prohibition of non-detectable mines and those designed to be triggered by mine-detection equipment; a ban on long-lived land-mines; and our proposal for more frequent review conferences.

Regrettably, it proved impossible to adopt even such interim steps as these. More work is clearly needed to convince some States that international norms have changed. We commit ourselves to that effort when the Review Conference reconvenes in January next year.

One factor that offers some hope is the consensus adoption by the General Assembly two days ago of the resolution on the moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines. In welcoming the unilateral moratoriums of some 25 countries, the General Assembly encouraged others to follow suit, and urged all parties to

the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to reach agreement on measures to strengthen prohibitions and restrictions governing land-mine use and transfer.

But even as we seek long-term legal solutions to the land-mine problem, it continues to grow. As we heard at the International Meeting on Mine Clearance held this year in Geneva pursuant to resolution 49/215, there are now more than 110 million land-mines in the ground of more than 60 countries. And, even worse, as we have heard again today, although we removed some 100,000 mines last year, more than two million new ones were laid.

That is a dreadful legacy for civilian populations around the globe. Hundreds of people are killed or maimed each week — most of them innocent civilians — many of them defenceless children.

The Geneva meeting addressed the issue on two levels. First, it enabled Governments to pledge over US$ 20 million to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance, with a further US$ 60 million directed towards other mine-clearance activities. Recognizing the vital humanitarian role of the Trust Fund and its need for guaranteed regular funding, New Zealand pledged NZ$ 100,000 per annum for the next three years. These contributions, together with the funding from the regular budget, help place the United Nations mine-clearance programmes on a sound financial footing.

The meeting also enabled experts to deliberate on the full range of mine-clearance issues, the aim being to develop programmes making the most effective and efficient use of the funds available.

New Zealand believes more can be done in this regard. We say this based on our experience both on the ground, and here at United Nations Headquarters.

New Zealand has participated in United Nations mine-clearance operations in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Mozambique and Angola. In Mozambique we played a leading role in turning around a programme which faced serious implementation problems. We are now also engaged in assisting in solving problems with implementation in Angola.

In central Bosnia our peace-keeping contingent, on its own initiative, has introduced an innovative mine-education and mine-awareness programme which has been picked up by other peace-keeping units.

Here in New York we were pleased to see the Secretary-General designate the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) as the focal point in the United Nations system for mine-clearance activities. Such a focal point is essential if the Organization is to build on the lessons learned from different operations. There should never be a need for managers of different programmes to spend time trying to re-invent the wheel.

New Zealand has therefore contributed financially towards the strengthening of DHA's Mine Clearance and Policy Unit. In addition, we have provided two experienced de-mining officers from the New Zealand Defence Force to serve in the Secretariat.

The resolution before us today, in document A/50/L.57, which is co-sponsored by New Zealand, records the good progress that has been made in enhancing the ability of the United Nations to deal effectively with the challenge of mine-clearance operations. But more needs to be done. There is still too much overlap between the de-mining activities of the Department of Peace-keeping Operations (DPKO) and DHA. As I have said, the Secretary-General has designated DHA as the focal point for mine-clearance activities. In New Zealand's view, the United Nations should collocate the de-mining resources of DHA and DPKO to ensure that a more efficient and coordinated approach is taken to mine clearance in support of peace-keeping operations and humanitarian requirements, both during and after the mandate period.

More emphasis needs to be placed on national capacity-building. That provides the only hope for long-term sustainable mine clearance. While there is a role in the short term for utilizing the energies and experience of contract de-mining teams and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), this in no way reduces the need for countries threatened by mines to give emphasis to building up their own national de-mining capacities. All New Zealand's contributions to date have been directed towards such capacity-building. We will continue to focus our efforts in that direction.

We can offer no immediate solutions to this devastating problem. We can only offer our help and expertise to those most affected. We urge others to join us — both at the international negotiating table and in the minefields of the world — to demonstrate that there is an international commitment to reduce, and maybe one day remove, the threat posed by land-mines.

Mr. Ouch (Cambodia) (*interpretation from French*): The General Assembly, by adopting resolutions in the last two years on agenda item 46 entitled "Assistance in mine clearance", has clearly and convincingly shared the world's concern with regard to the heavy threat weighing on the lives of millions of human beings as a result of the millions of land-mines laid in a large number of countries of the world, including the Kingdom of Cambodia, and has noted the enormous efforts being made by the international community to find a definitive solution to these problems, to mitigate the suffering and unspeakable pain caused to innocent civilians, including women and children, and to defend their right to life and economic and social progress.

My delegation learned with great interest the contents of the detailed report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/50/408. We wish to thank him deeply. This report reflects the character and the dimensions of the problem of land-mines and other explosive devices, and it speaks of the untiring efforts made at the national and international levels to resolve the pressing problems involved. It enlightens us as to the scope and complexity of the task we face. It also clarifies the reason for the urgent need to strengthen and improve the coordination of international efforts to provide assistance in mine clearing.

We endorse the opinion of the Secretary-General, as expressed in the above report, with regard to consideration of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons at the next meeting of the States parties, meaningful restrictions on the transfer of land-mines, their component parts and land-mine technology, and the implementation of the moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines, in keeping with General Assembly resolutions 48/75 K and 49/75 D.

Cambodia has suffered from a long war. It has to undergo further suffering due to the presence of mines which hinder the national reconstruction process well after the conflict has ended.

In the Peace Agreements signed in Paris in 1991, mine clearance was one of the solutions to the problems of Cambodia, intended to ensure a return to normal social and economic life after more than 20 years of war, which had left numerous regions of our country infested with 8 million to 10 million land-mines. As is indicated by the Secretary-General in his report, one out of every 236 Cambodians has lost the use of at least one limb. At present, there are 40,000 amputees.

These land-mines continue to claim more and more victims every month — the majority of them between 20 and 30 years of age — and this constant danger to the lives of our people will continue for another 75 years. Its removal will require an enormous investment of time and money. For poor countries, like Cambodia, this heavy task is an additional burden on top of the destruction left by the Khmer Rouge regime and years of war.

Aware of its responsibility at the humanitarian level, with the support of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), the Royal Government of Cambodia, despite its meagre resources, established the Cambodia Mine Action Centre in June 1992 to take over UNTAC's mine-clearance programme as a means of equipping itself with an integrated national structure to strengthen its methods of dealing with mine clearance. With this programme of assistance for mine clearance, begun jointly by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Cambodia Mine Action Centre officially began operations in November 1993, and it has committed itself to establishing, in cooperation with the international community, a mine-clearing programme with four major components: mine clearance, mine-clearance training, mine survey and mine awareness.

The board of directors of the Cambodia Mine Action Centre was established on 13 February 1995, following a decision by the Government. The role of this board is to provide the Centre with guidelines that are in keeping with the Government's reconstruction programme, of which mine clearance is one of the priorities. In addition to the governing council, a steering committee, consisting of representatives of the donor countries and UNDP, has been set up. This committee meets every six months. At each meeting, the Centre is required to submit for discussion its work plan, a progress report and any other matters of interest.

The financing provided by the international community for mine-clearance operations as part of that programme will come to an end in April 1996, just when the Royal Government of Cambodia is encountering major difficulties, both economic and financial, and when the lives of thousands of Cambodians are still daily under threat from the Khmer Rouge outlaws, who, throughout the length of the border between Cambodia and Thailand, constantly engage in acts of destruction and sabotage against their peaceful existence. So long as these activities continue, the number of displaced persons and victims will continue to increase.

In this respect, parallel with the untiring efforts being undertaken by the Royal Government of Cambodia and with a view to the peaceful resolution of these matters, my delegation wishes to appeal to all friendly countries and to the international community to continue to provide assistance for the Cambodia Mine Action Centre well beyond the deadline of April 1996 so that it may be able finally to solve this urgent problem.

I should like to avail myself of this formal occasion to express the deep gratitude of the Government and all the people of Cambodia to the Governments and peoples of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the United States of America, France, Holland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom and Sweden and to UNDP and all the other United Nations bodies involved for their timely and selfless assistance to Cambodia's mine-clearance programme. Our thanks go also to non-governmental organizations, such as Norwegian People's Aid, Handicap International, the Halo Trust, the Mine Advisory Group and the Compagnie française d'assistance spécialisée, for their help and their close and fruitful cooperation.

The land-cultivation problems, the human tragedies in the countries affected and the high cost of removal are reason enough to work jointly for a total ban on the manufacture and export of mines. It is in this spirit that the Royal Government of Cambodia has expressed its complete support for the proposal, introduced by the President of the United States at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, for the final elimination of anti-personnel land-mines and is actually preparing to sign the Geneva Convention of 10 October 1980 — the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects — and its Protocols. The Cambodian Government is also happy to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/50/L.45, concerning a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines, and of draft resolution A/50/L.57, on assistance for mine clearance, which is now before the General Assembly today for decision.

Mr. Rowe (Australia): All discussions of the problem of land-mines are redolent with statistics and verbal images of a profoundly shocking and disturbing nature, invoking numbers of civilians, including children, killed or injured, the extent of their injuries, the cost of rehabilitation, the effect on their livelihoods and their prospects for family life, the acreage of arable land laid waste and the incalculable debilitating social and political effects of living with a constant source of terror.

Mine clearance must be one of our highest priorities in development cooperation, both bilaterally and through the United Nations and regional organizations. There is no simple way of activating the necessary resources for mine clearance. We realize that there is a political dimension to intergovernmental discussions on this issue, which perpetuates the notion that developed countries are hoarding to themselves, for the sake of their commercial and military advantage, new and effective mine-clearance technologies that should be handed over to the United Nations.

I should like to quote from one writer on this subject:

> "The costs of mine clearance, if undertaken in a serious way, would likely equal the full development budgets of some of the poorest mine-infested countries. The reason for this is that mine clearance still consists principally of a person with a stick, probing the ground a few centimetres at a time. It is slow and dangerous work, and progress is measured in square metres rather than kilometres. Available alternatives all have significant limitations, and methods appropriate to battlefield mine breaching are not suitable for the large-area clearance necessary for civilian mine clearance. New technologies for civilian mine clearance are being discussed but are still in limited use or under research and development. Mine clearance experts generally agree that, although new technologies may provide significant cost and time savings in some clearance situations, no technological 'silver bullet' will cause the problem to go away."

In this context, we should like to draw delegations' attention to the resolution on anti-personnel land-mines adopted at the just-concluded 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which urged States to take concrete action to increase their support for mine-clearance efforts.

Mine clearance, at the rate and scale we need to do it, requires money — lots of it — expertise and training programmes. Australia has been at the forefront of mine-clearance assistance, both in terms of financial contributions and the services of our defence force experts. We were one of the first countries into Afghanistan in 1989 and the last to leave in 1993. In that time we helped to train over 14,000 Afghans in mine clearance.

Australian defence personnel continue to serve in Mozambique and Cambodia. We also provide funding for mine clearance to the Cambodia Mine Action Centre and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) accelerated de-mining programme in Mozambique and to the United Nations Office for the coordination of assistance to Afghanistan.

We spent $4 million on de-mining in Cambodia in 1994, and, as we announced at the mine-clearance meeting in July, our contribution to the Cambodia Mine Action Centre in the financial year 1995-1996 is $2.5 million. We also assist the Australian Red Cross financially for its treatment and rehabilitation work in Cambodia.

Our current financial contribution to mine clearance in Angola, Afghanistan and Mozambique is close to $1 million. And we have contributed half a million dollars to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund. In Australia we have increased our spending on mine clearance, technology research to US $1 million annually. In all, our total financial contribution to de-mining is in the order of A$ 20 million.

While proud of our record, we are also inspired by the courage of the local civilians in mine-afflicted areas in learning the dangerous and painstaking work of mine clearance in order to protect their families and rebuild their economy.

Having clearly outlined the Australian Government's direct interest in this subject, I would like to make some further observations.

One of the most disturbing aspects of the land-mines problem is that we cannot be sure, and there is reason to doubt, that we are yet close to the rate and scale of mine clearance that is needed in order to reduce the number of laid mines at all, let alone really make a dent. In addition to applying more resources, we need to know that we have radically curtailed the rate of new mine laying.

I fear that there are States in which regular armed forces, insurgent groups or civilians are engaged in mine laying right now, and that, as I speak, arms manufacturers in some States are exporting mines, indifferent to the likelihood that they will be used recklessly and wantonly in breach of fundamental humanitarian principles on the protection of civilians from deliberate or indiscriminate attack. These States must exercise their responsibility to put an end to indiscriminate mine use.

Australia urges all Governments to begin by ratifying the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and to adopt nationally the strictest possible rules on the use, import and export of land-mines, and to ensure those rules are effectively implemented in areas under their control. In this regard, we welcome the increased rate of accessions to the Convention since the current Review Conference was convened two years ago. At that point there were somewhere between 30 and 35 States parties. With the recent accessions of Uganda and Togo, the number now stands at 57 by our count, which is practically double. We hope this trend will continue.

States parties to the 1980 Convention must set an example by making the rules in Protocol II, which covers land-mines, as strong as they can be. Of course, the optimum outcome from the point of view of humanitarian interests would be a ban on land-mines. We assume, though, that the goal of the negotiators at the Review Conference, which started in Vienna last September, is to balance humanitarian and military concerns. We think that they need to set their sights higher than they have so far, in order to strike the right balance.

We are concerned that in September some delegations were questioning fundamental principles on protecting civilians, such as the use of fencing and marking around mine fields. Our Ambassador for disarmament, commenting in Vienna on the circumstances that led to the suspension of the Conference, said:

> "the Australian Government is looking to this Conference to provide the sort of far-sighted vision that achieved in the past international agreements on humanitarian rules such as the Hague and Geneva Conventions on the conduct of war. Those Conventions and their Protocols accept that there must be a balancing of humanitarian and security interests. We believe the conference has, so far, not been giving due weight to humanitarian concerns".

Indeed, we noted that the reasoning behind some positions was not even justified by military rationale, but was related to the financial cost of bringing stockpiles into compliance with new obligations so that, for example, undetectable plastic mines can be banned, as they should be.

The Conference did make significant progress towards agreement on important issues, such as the application of the Convention to non-international armed

conflicts, restrictions on transfers, a mechanism for regular meetings of the States parties, and five-yearly review conferences. We look to all delegations to the resumed sessions of the Review Conference to ensure that this progress is consolidated.

We also look for a continuous strengthening of international norms in this area. Australia's goal is that, pending readiness for a ban on land-mines, States will at least abandon the insidious long-lived mines. Otherwise, the mine-clearance problem will never go away, and we, and future generations, will continue to be haunted by the images that bring us together today.

Mr. Ibarra (Nicaragua) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First, on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, I would like to thank the Secretary-General, for his report (A/50/408) entitled "Assistance in mine clearance". This is a substantive document on United Nations activities and programmes regarding the problem of mine clearance. However, we would express concern that this report mentions the problem of mine clearance in Central America incompletely. For example, it makes no reference to Nicaragua, in spite of the fact that in July this year a full report on the mine-clearance situation there was submitted to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. We would very much appreciate the correction of this omission relating to Nicaragua, as well as with regard to other Central American countries not mentioned in the report.

For the third consecutive year, the Central American countries are making a joint intervention on this matter of paramount importance to our region. We reaffirm our deep concern at the presence of mines and other unexploded devices in most of Central America. Their presence has acknowledged social, economic and humanitarian consequences that impede the return of normality which would promote the development of the entire region.

Mine clearance in our countries is indispensable for economic and social recovery, especially in view of conditions in countries where we have been devastated by years of conflict, as well as by the complex and costly character of mine-clearance programmes.

Consequently, the contribution of the international community, whether bilateral, multilateral or through the contributions of regional organizations or United Nations bodies, is fundamental for helping lessen the disastrous effects of the presence of mines in our countries.

For this reason, we note with great satisfaction the Secretary-General's convening of the International Meeting on Mine Clearance in Geneva from 5 to 7 July 1995, and we welcome the considerable pledges made during the conference to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. Those contributions will make it possible for the United Nations to initiate and support operations in a more timely and effective way. It is also important to note that the Geneva Meeting heightened the international community's awareness of the problems related to land-mines. A supplementary meeting in the near future would greatly facilitate follow-up work in this urgently crucial task.

Central America actively participated in the Geneva conference, where, with the participation of the Inter-American Defence Board of the Organization of American States, it organized a meeting to report to members of the international community — especially to cooperators — on the present status of mine clearance in Central America. We also emphasized the importance of international technical and economic assistance and cooperation, both bilateral and multilateral, in support of the efforts of Central American Governments to continue mine-clearance programmes.

On this occasion, Central America, as in the past two years, has joined in sponsoring the draft resolution on assistance in mine clearance in order to contribute to finding a solution to this difficult problem.

In the same spirit, the countries of the Central American isthmus submitted to the General Assembly last 22 November a draft resolution entitled "International assistance to and cooperation with the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America". The draft resolution was adopted last 12 December as resolution A/50/58 B. The resolution appeals to the Secretary-General, the bodies of the United Nations system — in particular, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs — and the international community to give the Central American Governments the material, technical and financial assistance they need to complete mine-clearance activities in the region and to include such activities among the central priorities of the new programme for international assistance and cooperation for Central America, with the aim of improving and promoting reconstruction and sustainable development, thereby leading to lasting peace in the region.

We should like to take this opportunity to thank the General Assembly, the various bodies of the United

Nations system, the international community and, especially, the Secretary-General for their appeal for the provision of the material, technical and financial assistance required by Central American Governments to complete mine-clearance activities in the region.

In order to facilitate the administration of mine-clearance activities the Governments of the Central American countries have provided the Department of Humanitarian Affairs a data bank for mine removal with full information relating to mine-clearance activities carried out to date.

Mine-clearance work in Central America has been obstructed by a lack of stable financial and technical cooperation, which is needed by Central American Governments if they are to complete the activities already begun in this area.

We must emphasize that broad and effective coordination is also needed in order to eliminate the duplication of efforts and prevent certain areas from being neglected, since that could have adverse consequences for the results of programmes in the affected countries. Greater and growing coordination between the various United Nations bodies and the regional organizations that have been involved in these endeavours — in our case, the Organization of American States — is indispensable if we are to achieve the best possible results in the task we have set for ourselves.

We welcome the restrictive measures adopted by many States Members of the United Nations regarding the transfer, production or reduction of existing land-mines and other anti-personnel devices as a first step towards their complete elimination.

In this spirit, the countries of our region have reaffirmed that a general, verifiable agreement banning and restricting the use of certain conventional weapons would considerably reduce the suffering of the civilian population and of combatants. For this reason, we regret that the Review Conference of the 1980 Convention, which took place in Vienna from 25 September to 13 October this year, did not complete its consideration of bans and restrictions on the use of mines, booby traps and other devices referred to in Protocol II of the Convention. For this reason, we urge States parties to redouble their efforts to conclude negotiations aimed at consolidating the Protocol during the resumed sessions of the Review Conference, which are to take place in Geneva from 15 to 19 January 1996 and from 22 April to 3 May 1996.

We Central Americans are aware of the importance of the growing number of countries that have signed and ratified the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. Our countries are taking the necessary measures to become parties to the Convention and its Protocols in the near future.

With every passing day, the international community is more aware of the world-wide problems caused by land-mines. Nevertheless, last year only 100,000 land-mines were deactivated while between 2 million and 5 million mines were laid. These figures highlight the fact that this is not a static problem; it is a recurring humanitarian crisis that is worsening day by day and requires greater efforts and political will if we are to put an end to this inhumane situation in which human lives are destroyed, as is the environment as a whole.

We therefore consider it our obligation to reiterate once again that the ultimate solution to the problem caused by the presence of mines and other unexploded devices in various parts of the world is to achieve a complete ban on the production, stockpiling, exporting and proliferation of this type of inhumane weapon, and the future efforts of the international community must be directed towards this objective. Central America can be counted on with full confidence in those efforts.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

In view of the desire of the Members to dispose of this item expeditiously, and at the request of the sponsors of the draft resolution, I should like to consult the Assembly with a view to proceeding immediately to consider the draft resolution contained in document A/50/L.57. In this connection, since the draft resolution was only circulated this morning, it would be necessary to waive the relevant provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting."

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees with this proposal.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/50/L.57.

I shall now call on the representative of Mexico who wishes to make a statement in explanation of position before action is taken on the draft resolution. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico will vote in favour of the draft resolution in document A/50/L.57.

Millions of land-mines remain dangerously hidden as cruel instruments bearing witness to wars. Particularly distressing are explosions of these devices in areas where conflicts have already been settled. Mexico, of course, takes a positive view of measures to ease the suffering of the thousands of victims, including many children.

Nevertheless, we cannot and must not deceive ourselves. The effort of the international community to clear mines will never be enough. We must be aware that because of the huge costs and difficulties involved, the number of mines cleared or defused is much less, really much, much less — as we all know, and as I have heard several speakers say today — than the number of devices being planted in every corner of the world.

Mine clearance and a freeze on exports are lofty goals, but nothing more than palliatives that in no way solve the problem by which all profess to be affected.

If all the Member States represented here truly aim to eliminate any possibility of children, women and men being killed, crippled or somehow prevented from contributing fully to the development of their communities and countries, then the answer is simple.

We must ban, once and for all and for ever, the manufacture of these instruments of pain and death. This is the only truly ethical option before the international community. Until a serious effort is made along these lines, we will be deceiving ourselves.

The Review Conference of the 1980 Inhumane Weapons Convention, which is to resume its work in 1996, will offer a fresh chance for all Member States to show their real level of commitment to eradicating the threat that mines represent to the lives and limbs of men, women and children throughout the world. Mexico will remain committed to the complete elimination of all types of mines.

The Acting President: There are no other speakers in explanation of vote or position.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/50/L.57.

I should like to announce that since its introduction, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/50/L.57: Azerbaijan, Latvia, Mozambique, the Republic of Korea, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/50/L.57?

Draft resolution A/50/L.57 was adopted (resolution 50/82).

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 46?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.